The Interpolation of the Pericope of the Adulteress in the Gospels

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ABSTRACT

This study reports and analyzes the evidence that proves the fact of the interpolation of the Pericope of the Adulteress in the Gospels, especially in John 7.53-8.11, by anonymous scribes, based on the Science of Textual Criticism. Thus, it is a selection of the most convincing evidence found so far, based on external evidence and internal evidence in the manuscripts that include it and those that exclude it, especially the oldest ones. Therefore, the immense amount of speculative theories, which represent the majority in the literature on the subject, to explain the fact of exclusion and inclusion are left aside, leaving the reader the option of getting to know them through the studies cited and those in the bibliography.

KEYWORDS: Pericope of the Adulteress, Textual Criticism, Interpolation, Textual Variants, Bible Criticism,

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1. Introduction

Those of us who are older may have had fun playing a game known as “Chinese whispers” (telephone game in USA and Canada) in their childhood, at a time when all telephones communicated with each other via wires. The game consisted of a group of children lining up, and then one of them, at one end of the formation, would say a phrase in the ear of the child next to them, so that the latter would transmit the same phrase heard to the child next to him/her, and so on, until the phrase reached the last child lined up at the other end of the formation. Then, the child at the other end of the formation would say out loud the phase he/she heard, so that everyone could check how much the phrase had changed until it reached the child at the other end of the formation. On very rare occasions, the phrase would reach the other end unchanged, sometimes even unrecognizable from the initial phrase.

In the past, before the invention of graphic reproduction, with all due respect and disregard for the playful nature of the example above, the process of handwritten reproduction of ancient texts had an experience almost similar to the game mentioned above. The more it was transmitted, the more it was altered, or the more it was copied, the more it was corrupted, since handwritten reproduction was not always faithful, as textual infidelity occurred through involuntary or intentional alteration, as we will see in some examples below.

2. Textual Criticism

This is a science that deals with the identification of textual variants, different recessions or different versions of texts, whether handwritten or printed. These texts can range in date from the oldest written in cuneiform characters, printed on clay tablets, to unpublished versions of works by authors from the 21st century. In the past, when graphic reproduction of a literary work did not yet exist, the scribes who were responsible for manually copying documents were perhaps almost all literate, but many were simply copyists, reproducing the letters without even understanding the meaning of the words. Therefore, involuntary changes during the transcription process occurred when orthographically copied. In addition, intentional changes occurred for political, religious and censorship reasons.

The objective of the textual critic's work is to find the best understanding of the creation and historical transmission of a text and its variants. The result of this endeavour may be the creation of a Critical Edition, arriving at a methodically collated text. Therefore, when faced with many recessions, versions and textual variants in different manuscripts of the same work, and if the textual critic does not have the original (autograph) text, then techniques of Textual Criticism can be used in order to reconstruct the original text as closely as possible. In other words, a critical edition attempts, first, to reconstruct an archetype that is as close to the original text as the evidence allows and, second,

to reveal the textual history of its reception and transmission through the analysis of manuscript variants. Usually, a critical edition also involves the creation of a genealogical tree, arranged in families or lineages of manuscripts, which allows the editor to choose the redactions based not merely on his own preferences, ideological bias or confessional commitment, but based on objective and impartial criteria.

Gordon D. Fee explained the importance of Textual Criticism to the biblical interpreter and translator as follows: “Textual criticism, commonly known in the past as ‘lower criticism’, in contrast to the better-known ‘higher criticism’ (historical and literary), is the science of comparing all known manuscripts of a given work in an effort to trace the history of variants within the text in order to discover its original form. Textual criticism is therefore of special significance to the biblical interpreter in at least three ways:

1) It attempts to determine the authentic words of an author. The first question an interpreter asks is ‘what does the text say?’ before asking, ‘what does the text mean?’[1]

2) Most Christians have access to the New Testament only in translations, and the basic condition in choosing a translation is its accuracy in reproducing the author’s original text. Before deciding what any of the words mean, the

[1] That is, you must first know exactly what the author said and then find the meaning of what he said.

translator's first concern must be that he or she is translating the very words that the author wrote.
3) A knowledge of the history of textual variation will also help the interpreter to see how the passage was understood during the early history of the Church. In many cases, textual variants are a reflection of the theological interests of the church and the scribe, and sometimes such changes bring one into contact with historical exegesis" (FEE, 2000: 03).[2]

3. Textual Transmission in Antiquity

However, the problem with the oldest texts is that many were transmitted orally for centuries before being transcribed into written form, resulting in different versions or recessions of the same work, thus suffering many alterations and omissions during the period of oral transmission. After all, it is only possible to identify textual alterations from the written record of texts previously transmitted orally. This occurrence is very common in the oldest texts of Hinduism, the Vedas (Sanhitās, Brāhmanas, Āranyakas and Upanishads). After all, before the creation of copyright law, it was not the authors of the work who had the right to the works of their

[2] In other words, the interpreter or translator must recognize the differences in interpretation of the Bible throughout history. For example, it is possible to find terms used in current Bible translations with meanings that do not exactly correspond to the meanings at the time the biblical books were composed, as well as in the first manuscript copies.

authorship, but rather those who transmitted them, whether they were the reciters or the transmitting religious traditions. In other words, the transmitters of the texts considered themselves the owners of the work, consequently they made the desired alterations and omissions. In addition, in the past, it was common for an author to attribute the authorship of his work to another more prestigious or famous author, in order to obtain more prestige or more authority. This practice is called pseudo epigraphy (Greek: ψευδεπιγραφία). It was very common in Hinduism, especially in older works, to the point where authors attributed authorship to the gods.

As for oral transmission in the Vedic period of Hinduism, “it is not possible to know precisely the degree of fidelity or alteration in the oral transmission of this period. What is possible to know are only the surviving traces in the manuscripts, after these texts were passed into written form. In other words, the number of textual and editorial differences, when comparing the recessions of the same text, indicates that, at the time of written transcription, the texts were already different due to the alterations or omissions that occurred during the long period of oral transmission, especially when we compare the same text transmitted in different regions and at different times. The differences may be in the length of the text, in the arrangement of the chapters, in the order of the paragraphs or verses, in the writing, in the euphony, in the meter, in the greater or lesser presence of archaisms and in the linguistic style. These large numbers of textual

differences require the prior comparison of many manuscripts of the same work, in order to find the text closest to the original, obviously, when we do not have the autograph manuscript, in order to arrive at the critical edition. This work is known as Textual Criticism. However, few works of Hinduism have been published through this prior process of critical preparation, through the comparison of the largest possible number of manuscripts before the edition. Most of the time, the work is published based on the use of only one manuscript or a few manuscripts. So, when this extensive work of comparing many manuscripts is done, before the publication of the critical edition, many surprises emerge, as it is discovered that many previous editions do not correspond to the version closest to the probable original text, or that this version is the most altered among the manuscripts compared."

A very glaring example in Hinduism was the perception of how the editions of the epic Mahābhārata, prior to the monumental work of preparing the Critical Edition, undertaken by a team of more than twenty researchers, led by V. S. Sukthankar (1887-1943), "begun in 1931 and completed in 1966" (ADLURI and BAGCHEE, 2018: 11), diverged from the then completed Critical Edition, after the comparison of a large number of manuscripts of this epic. Another monumental critical edition of a Hindu text, which deserves to be noted here, was that of the Mānava Dharmasāstra (Code of Laws of Manu), carried out by Patrick Olivelle, published in 2005 (Oxford University Press). For this critical edition, he collated, during

the preparation process, 53 manuscripts, the citations of 12 authors, the examination of 38 more manuscripts and a careful reading of 9 commentaries, as well as the inclusion of an extensive and detailed critical apparatus.

“In Vedic antiquity, the different recessions of the Vedic texts led to the formation of several Vedic schools of transmission (shākhās). Thus, in Patānjali's Mahābhāshya, the existence of 1,131 shākhās (Vedic schools) in the past is mentioned, 21 of which were from the Rig Veda, 101 from the Yajur Veda, 1,000 from the Sāma Veda and 9 from the Atharva Veda. While the Muktika Upanishad (I. 01.07-14) mentions 1,180 schools (shākhās) as follows: “The Vedas are mentioned as being four in number, their schools (shākhās) are many. So also the Upanisads. The Rig-veda has 21 shākhās, the Yajur-veda 109 shākhās, the Sāma Veda 1,000 and the Atharva Veda 50. In each shākhā there is an Upanishad. The Caranavyūha, a Parishita of the Yajurveda, lists five schools (shākhās) of the Rig Veda: Shākala, Bāskala, Āshwalāyana, Shankhāyana and Māndūkāyana. Other sources give a larger number of Rigvedic schools. There are seven according to the Atharva Veda Parishita. However, of these schools (shākhās), only 13 Samhitās (collections of hymns) have survived to this day: 03 from the Rig Veda (Shākala, Āshwalāyana and Shānkhāyana, the latter also called Kaushītaki); 05 of the Yajur Veda (04 of the Black Yajur Veda: Kathaka, Kapisthala, Mantrāyaniya and Taittiriya and 01 of the White Yajur Veda: Vājasaneyi), 03 of the Sāma Veda

(Ranayaniya, Kauthuma and Jaiminiya) and 02 of the Atharva Veda (Shaunaka and Paippalada). The Āshwalāyana Samhitā of the Rig Veda has 209 more verses than the Shākala Samhitā recession of the Rig Veda" (BOTELHO, 2022: 14-5).

A curiosity found after comparing many manuscripts of the Mahābhārata was that, although the Hindu tradition mentions that the epic has 100 thousand shlokas (double verses), including the epic and the Harivamsa, no manuscript was found with such a number of verses. The manuscripts collated with the largest number of verses have 95,824 verses (manuscripts in Palm Leaf क, ख and ग). The known printed editions, prior to the Critical Edition, have the following numbers of verses: the Bombay edition 84,829 verses, the Calcutta, Telugu and Kumbhakonam editions 84,836 verses each. The Critical Edition reduced the number of verses to 73,640, with an additional 6,073 from the Harivamsa (the appendix to the Mahābhārata, out of 16,374 in the traditional version), thus reaching 79,713 verses and additional 297 prose passages, after eliminating the verses and prose passages considered to be interpolations (ADLURI and BAGCHEE, 2018: 359).

4. The Origins of Textual Criticism

This practice was no different with the oldest Greek texts. Concern arose when the large number of textual and editorial differences were noticed in the then-existing manuscripts of the epics Iliad and

Odyssey when they were transcribed into written form, since the changes that occurred before the written record are not possible to perceive, since the texts were transmitted only orally. Then, “because the reciters who recited passages of the Iliad and Odyssey in public occasionally altered the text in order to suit the special occasion or the very notion of an effective arrangement, there were many versions in circulation even in the earliest times. Then, subsequently, several ‘urban versions’ arose...” Therefore, “by 1990, the number of manuscript traditions had reached 703 for the Iliad and 236 for the Odyssey” (METZGER and EHRMAN, 2005: 197 and 198n2). The first records of a systematic work of comparing manuscripts to find which passages could be closest to the original, or to the ancient oral version, as well as the work of restoring the text, are found in Greek documents from Hellenistic Antiquity, particularly among the librarians of the then magnificent Library of Alexandria, whose collection brought together around 600 thousand works, an extraordinary number for the time. The directors of the Library were concerned and, therefore, mobilized to make available to readers the most accurate editions of the Homeric poems. The first, of which we have record, was Zenodotus of Ephesus (325 – 240 BCE), who, even before 274 BCE, carried out a comparison of many manuscripts in order to restore the original text of the Iliad and the Odyssey. Zenodotus' corrections of the texts were made in the following manner: he eliminated verses that he found to be false; he marked other verses as

doubtful, but left them in his edition; he transposed the order of the verses; and finally, he introduced new wordings that were not current. After Zenodotus, the director of the Library, Aristophanes of Byzantium (c. 257–180 BCE), in his edition of the Iliad and the Odyssey, employed a variety of critical symbols to indicate his opinion on the authenticity of the passages of the text so marked. His student and successor, Aristarchus of Somatrace (c. 220 – c. 144 BCE), edited the works of half a dozen Greek authors and published two critical editions of Homer's poems, thus supplementing the number of critical symbols that his predecessor had used. Thus, there was a relatively well-developed academic discipline of literary and textual criticism in antiquity, especially in Alexandria.

5. The Beginning of Textual Criticism of the Bible

The initial period of transmission of biblical texts (1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th centuries CE) is difficult to reconstruct. First, due to the fact that they were transmitted orally before being transcribed into written form, so we do not know how much they were altered before the process of writing down and, second, the autograph manuscripts did not survive, and the first apologists of the Church did not mention the existence of these autograph manuscripts, much less quoted passages from them, so the only recourse is to trust in subsequent copies. Much less, in the New Testament, not one author of the gospels mentions the existence of

another nor did he claim to have written based on another manuscript existing at the time, nothing is mentioned in the epistles either, so if they existed, they quickly disappeared. Leon Vaganay called this period “the period of relative freedom” (until 313 CE), and compared it to “a jigsaw puzzle that has most of the pieces missing and some remaining ones damaged” (VAGANAY, 1991: 89). Therefore, we must be content with the fact that what we have today is only a sketch of what the original compositions may have been, and thus, in some cases, only a conjecture of what the first manuscripts or texts transmitted orally before handwritten transcription were.

Furthermore, not only in the transcription of biblical texts, but also in many other manuscript copies of almost all traditions, it is not in all cases that the first compositions were often grammatically imperfect and rhetorically rough, so that they were subsequently corrected and refined in language by later copyists, so that it is not possible to know the degree of spelling and grammatical defects, as well as the roughness of the language of the autographs and the first copies, in comparison with the refined and elegant biblical text that we have today. These differences can be clearly perceived when we compare the rudimentary language of the Apocryphal Gospels with the refined language of the Canonical Gospels, since the latter underwent a long process of refinement at the hands of ancient and medieval copyists, more educated than the first copyists, in subsequent centuries. It is difficult to believe that fishermen, tax collectors and illiterate

people, most living in countryside, could dialogue with such a degree of grammatical correctness and linguistic elegance as we find today in the refined translations into contemporary languages. In the case of the texts of the New Testament, this possibility is particularly evident, since we know that many of the first Christians were poorly educated followers, as well as poor, which is why there were so few manuscripts in the early phase of Christianity. After all, the process of producing a manuscript in Antiquity, whether on papyrus or parchment, was expensive. Furthermore, it was not uncommon in Antiquity for manuscripts to be destroyed in a short period of time, since they were made with fragile papyrus and deteriorating parchment, whose resistance to time and successive handling was insufficient to preserve the material for a long time. Another reason for the rapid disappearance of autograph manuscripts was most likely the persecution, through imperial edicts, ordering the destruction of all copies of the sacred texts of Christians in the early years of Christianity. For, the careful modern techniques of preserving archaeological materials, such as those used today in libraries and museums, were not yet known.

Textual changes in the Gospels were noticed early on, both inside and outside the Church. Noticing the textual divergences in the New Testament, the Greek thinker Celsus (2nd century CE) observed that some “Christian believers, as if in a fit of drunkenness, went so far as to alter the original text of the three gospels, four or several times; they altered their content in order to enable

them to deny difficulties in the face of criticism" (Origen, Contra Celsum, vol. II.27). When we delve into Christian documents, the earliest known record of the practice of Textual Criticism of the biblical scriptures is the reproduction in the work of Eusebius of Caesarea (265 – 330 CE) of excerpts from a pamphlet by an anonymous author, repudiating the work of Theodore, a learned leather merchant who came from Byzantium to Rome, who was excommunicated by Pope Victor I (papacy: 187 – 198 CE). In this pamphlet, the anonymous author condemns Theodore and his followers for applying Textual Criticism to the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament in the following manner: 'They (Theodore and his followers) do not fear to make use of the divine scriptures (in order to make corrections), claiming that they had critically revised them...' (METZGER and EHRMAN, 2005: 199). However, we do not have much information about this first reference (185 – 250 CE). Much more relevant than Theodore's textual work was that undertaken by Origen of Alexandria (185 – 250 CE), who began a critical-textual study of the Old Testament in Hebrew, which took many years of research, which resulted in his edition of the Old Testament in six different juxtaposed versions, known as the Hexapla. He compiled the following six versions:

- A version in Hebrew
- The Secunda version, in Hebrew, with transliteration into Greek writing
- The version of Aquila of Sinope
- The version of Symmachus the Ebionite

- A Septuagint version with interpolations to indicate where a Hebrew passage was missing and marked with asterisks; as well as indications using critical signs where words, phrases and longer passages of the Septuagint did not reproduce the Hebrew original.
- Theodotion's version (for more information, see: SWEDE, 1989: 46s).

It is believed that the Hexapla had 6,000 pages in 50 volumes, and that it only existed in a single copy, which was lost. What we have today are only partial copies, fragments or quotations of excerpts in works by contemporary authors. In addition, this monumental work was available in the famous library of the presbyter Ponphilus of Caesarea (died in 309 CE), which served as a reference tool for many scholars, until the destruction of the library during the Islamic invasion in the 7th century CE (METZGER and EHRMAN, 2005: 200).

Whether or not Origen prepared a critical edition of the New Testament is still a matter of doubt among researchers; the greatest probability is that he did not. What we are left with is his concern with the different textualities in the Gospels in his time, for he complained that “the differences between the manuscripts (of the Gospels) have become great, either through the negligence of some copyists or through the perverse audacity of others; they either neglect to check what they have transcribed, or, in the process of checking, they enlarge or diminish (the text) as they please” (METZGER and EHRMAN, 2005: 200). He noted

the differences in wording between manuscripts in the passage Matthew 18:1, whose beginning of the first sentence ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ (en ekeine te ora – at that time) appears in other manuscripts as ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ημερα (en ekeine te emera – on that day). In addition, in Hebrews 2:9, some manuscripts render χάριτι θεοῦ (xariti theou – grace of God), in others χωρίς θεοῦ (xoris theou – without God, separated from God). Most contemporary translations translate it as "the grace of God" (for more details, see: METZGER, 1971: 664 and OMANSON, 2010: 471-2). He also pointed out the variant in Matthew 26.16-7, where the name of the thief arrested together with Jesus Christ is mentioned in some manuscripts as "Jesus Barabbas" (ἰησοῦν τὸν βαραββᾶν – Iesoun ton Barabban), while in other manuscripts it is mentioned only as "Barabbas" (βαραββᾶν – Barabban). Origen claimed that he preferred the wording just Barabbas, since the name Jesus should not be used for evildoers[3] (for more information, see: METZGER, 1971: 67-8 and OMANSON, 2010: 49-50). He also preferred the wording Bethabara (βηθαβαρα) instead of Bethania (βηθανίᾳ) in John 1.28, which differs in the manuscripts (METZGER, 1971: 199-200 and OMANSON, 2010: 166-7). He then suggested that

[3] Bruce M. Metzger was of the opinion that "the original text of Matthew had the double name in both verses (16 and 17), and that ἰησοῦν (Jesus) was intentionally suppressed in most manuscripts for reverential considerations" (METZGER, 1971: 68).

"perhaps all the manuscripts extant in his time could have become corrupted" (METZGER and EHRMAN, 2005: 201).

Jerome (347-420 CE), the well-known translator of the Bible into Latin, went further and more detailed than Origen in his perception of textual variants in biblical manuscripts. His perception went so far that he enumerated the cases of errors in the manuscript transcription of the New Testament:

1. Confusion of similar letters
2. Confusion of abbreviations
3. Accidents involving dittography[4] and haplography[5]
4. Metathesis of letters[6]
5. Assimilation or harmonization[7]
6. Transposition[8] and
7. Intentional corrections by scribes

In preparing his Latin translation, he consulted several Greek and Latin manuscripts. He pointed out "a large addition was found at the end of

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[4] Erroneous repetition of a passage of manuscript due to a copyist's error, which may be a repetition of a letter, syllable, word or phrase, which should only appear once.

[5] Accidental omission by the copyist of a letter, syllable, word or phrase due to carelessness.

[6] It consists of changing the position of a phoneme or syllable within a word, for example: sempre for semper; estuprar for estrupar; depredar for depedrar, víbora for bivora, etc.

[7] Intentional change introduced by the scribe in order to make one text agree with a parallel passage in another book.

[8] It is the change, voluntary or involuntary, in the order of letters, words or sentences in a text by the copyist.

the Gospel According to Mark. He did not inform us where he found these manuscripts, and no copy was known until the twentieth century, when the passage appeared in a manuscript brought from Cairo"[9] (METZGER and EHRMAN, 2005: 202). Concerning the Latin versions of the New Testament, Metzger and Ehrman pointed out: "By the end of the fourth century CE, the limitations and imperfections of the Old Latin (Vetus Latina)[10] versions had become apparent to the leaders of the Roman Church. It was not surprising that, around the year 382 CE, Pope Damasus asked the most able biblical scholar of the day, Sophorius Eusebius Hieronymus, now known as Jerome, to undertake a revision of the Latin Bible. Within about a year, Jerome was able to present to Pope Damasus the first fruits of his labours, a revision of the text of the four Gospels, where the variations had been extreme. In a letter of introduction, he explained the principles he followed: he used a relatively good Latin text (perhaps the Codex Veronesis) as the basis for his revision and compared it with some ancient Greek manuscripts. He emphasized that he treated the Latin text of the time as conservatively as possible and altered it only when the meaning was distorted" (Idem: 105). However, we do not know exactly which manuscripts Jerome used, only

[9] This added passage is located immediately after Mark 16:14; for the translation of this interpolated passage, see METZGER and EHRMAN, 2005: 81

[10] These are the translations from Greek to Latin made before Jerome's Vulgate.

assumptions by current researchers, based on the manuscripts available today that existed at that time.

Among the supposed Latin texts used by Jerome, the Codex Veronesis (Verona Codex), kept in the library of the cathedral of Verona, Italy, a Latin manuscript from the 5th century CE, which contains the four nearly complete gospels (but in the order: Matthew, John, Luke and Mark), is suggested by researchers, despite Jerome's omission, as the type of text, perhaps a copy of an earlier manuscript, since it is dated to the 5th century CE, which he may have used as the basis for the preparation of the Vulgate (METZGER and EHMAN, 2005: 102).

More precisely, it was not only the Greek texts that were altered by copyists in antiquity, the Latin translations and those early versions into other ancient languages (Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, Slavic, etc.) also suffered the same fate. "It was inevitable that, in transmitting the text of Jerome's revision, the scribes corrupted his original work, sometimes through carelessness and sometimes through deliberate comparison with copies of the Old Latin versions (Vetus Latina). In order to justify Jerome's text, a number of recessions and editions were produced during the Middle Ages (...), however, each of these efforts to restore Jerome's original version eventually resulted in even greater textual corruption through the mixing of various types of Vulgates, which were associated with various European centers of scholarship. As a result, more than eight thousand Vulgate manuscripts that are extant today exhibit the

greatest amount of contamination of textual types" (METZGER and EHRMAN, 2005: 105-6; and for further details, see: HOUGHTON, 2016, passim).

Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE) was also concerned about textual problems. He noticed the error in the citation of the prophet Jeremiah, instead of the prophet Zechariah, in Matthew 27.09, which passage attributes to Jeremiah a prophecy that was actually spoken by Zechariah and is reproduced in Zechariah 11.12-3. Even so, most surviving manuscripts, Greek editions and translations into contemporary languages mistakenly attribute the prophecy to Jeremiah. Translations that are more recent add a note clarifying that some manuscripts attribute this prophecy to Zechariah or Isaiah (e.g., NRSVUE, 2021; Matthew, 27.09). Roger L. Omanson pointed out: "The name Ἰερεμίας (Jeremiah) has in its favour the testimony of good manuscripts of a variety of text types. However, the fact that the passage cited is not found in Jeremiah but appears to have been taken from Zechariah 11.12-3 explains why in several manuscripts the name Ζαχαρίᾶς (Zechariah) is inserted, while other manuscripts omit the name altogether. Two manuscripts include "Isaiah," perhaps because he is the prophet most often cited in the NT..." (OMANSON, 2010: 49; more details in: METZGER, 1971: 66-7).

Augustine also pointed out that "if the books of the New Testament are confused in the variety of Latin translations, they must give way to the Greek versions, especially those found in the most learned and researched churches" (METZGER and

EHRMAN, 2005: 203). A few authors in the Middle Ages also noticed the flaws in the Latin versions of the NT, especially in Jerome's version (predominant in the Middle Ages), at a time when Greek was in decline in Western Europe.

6. The Supremacy of the Latin Text in the Middle Ages

Translations of the Greek text of the New Testament into Latin were made in parts. Many passages, as well as entire books, had already been translated into Latin even before the famous versions that will be mentioned below. The oldest manuscripts of the Latin New Testament were copied in the 4th century CE. A common practice at the time was bilingual translation, sometimes with Greek in the left column and Latin in the right column of the folio (manuscript leaf) or through interlinear translation, that is, in one line the Greek text was reproduced and in another the Latin translation[11] (for more information, see: HOUGHTON, 2016: 19s; for an example of a manuscript with interlinear translation, see: METZGER and EHRMAN, 2005: 82).

During the Middle Ages, when interest in the study of the New Testament through Greek manuscripts was almost non-existent, the official version of the Church was the Latin version of

[11] This method is still used, albeit rarely, in some modern bilingual editions of the Greek New Testament Text with interlinear translation into a contemporary language.

Jerome's Vulgate. Therefore, the work of recovering the original text was done by comparing the various Latin manuscripts of the Vulgate and the Vetus Latina (Old Latin) versions, from when it was noticed that there were a large number of variations among the Latin manuscripts that were compared. Different translations of the same passage. Bruce Metzger and Bart D. Ehrman observed that “in Luke 24.4-5, there are at least 27 different versions in the ancient Latin manuscripts that have survived, which led to Jerome’s complaint to Pope Damasus that there were almost as many Latin translations as there were Greek manuscripts” (METZGER and EHRMAN 2005: 101). Therefore, there was a proliferation of Latin translations with different versions. So, unconcerned with the divergences, both among the Latin translations themselves and in comparison with the Greek manuscripts, the Vulgate was the canonical biblical text, and therefore recognized by the Church as the original. Thus, very few authors pointed out the textual, grammatical and orthographic differences between the Latin and Greek manuscripts. Such a task sounded like heresy, since doubting Jerome's version was provocative. Later, all the first printed editions of the Bible, after the invention of the movable type printing press by Gutenberg (mid-fifteenth century CE), were in Latin, based on Latin manuscripts, especially Jerome's Vulgate, which, due to the prestige of this translation, delayed interest in the printed publication of the Greek New Testament. Another reason for the delay was the difficulty in producing graphic types for the fonts of

the Greek letters. Kurt and Barbara Aland observed: “Theologians of that time were evidently quite satisfied with the Latin text of the New Testament, and anyone interested in the Greek text had to make use of a manuscript” (ALAND, 1995: 03). Therefore, the invention of graphic printing inaugurated a new era, but not for the Greek New Testament. The latter was only printed for the first time at the beginning of the sixteenth century CE; before this date, more than one hundred editions of the Latin Bible were printed and published (Idem: 03), as well as the printed publication of a much larger number of translations into vernacular languages translated from the Latin versions, especially the Vulgate. Given this situation, it is possible to perceive the prestige of the Latin Bible at that time and the contempt for the Greek text.

7. The Classical Method of Textual Criticism

Then, later in the Renaissance period, with the spread of knowledge of ancient Greek and the gradual weakening of confidence in the Latin versions, scholars began to correct the Latin Vulgate using the original Greek. Erasmus, one of the first to undertake this task on a larger scale than before, frequently referred to the variant redactions in the Greek manuscripts. The first biblical scholar to use all three classes of evidence (the Greek manuscripts, the ancient translations, and the quotations of the Fathers) to study the text of the New Testament was Francis Lucas of Bruges, in a work published in 1580 CE. However, the scientific

foundations of New Testament textual criticism were laid in four publications by Richard Simon (1638-1712 CE), a learned Catholic priest who was well ahead of his time in biblical scholarship. Metzger and Ehrman praised him: “Ignoring the traditional and dogmatic assumptions of his time, Simon critically examined the text of the Bible as a piece of literature. His works are full of precise observations and reasoning, and anticipate in detail many of the conclusions of scholars two and three centuries later” (METZGER and EHRMAN, 2005: 204). The classical method of textual criticism emerged in the Renaissance, when special attention was drawn to the forgeries of papal decrees, credentials of religious orders and Church history. The number of forgers increased significantly, which led the authorities to react to this increase. A well-known forger of that time was Giovanni Nanni (also known as Joannes Annius, 1432-1502 CE), a Dominican monk who published seventeen forged treatises, which he attributed to ancient Greek and Roman authors, works which he claimed to have found buried in the ground (Ibid.: 205-6 and 206n2).

8. The Printed Bible

The invention of the printing press with movable type by Johannes Gutenberg, around 1450 CE, had great consequences for world culture, and marked a new period in the history of the text of the New Testament, as well as in the work of publishing the Bible. From then on, copies of books could be

reproduced with absolute fidelity, more quickly and at a much lower cost, as had never been possible before. Thus very different from the expensive, slow and imperfect reproduction of handwritten text, which inaugurated a new era in the transmission of the New Testament.

The first two printed publications of the Greek New Testament were the Polyglot Bible, edited by Cardinal Ximenes (1436-1517 CE) in 1514[12]. However, it was not put on the market immediately, as it was awaiting authorization, so the first printed text of the Greek New Testament put on the market was that edited by the Rotterdam humanist Erasmus (1469-1536 CE) in 1516. These first editions, which became the basis for all subsequent editions until the 19th century CE, were made from late medieval manuscripts of inferior quality, since the work of collecting ancient Greek manuscripts was still in its infancy, when compared with the large collection of Greek manuscripts available today for comparison, more than five thousand. For example, the only Greek manuscript of Revelation available to Erasmus was so mutilated that he was forced to make up for the damaged parts by translating back from the Latin Vulgate into Greek (the last six verses). The redactions of these verses have never been found in any of the Greek manuscripts discovered subsequently.

[12] For a reproduction of a page from this first printed bilingual (Greek and Latin) edition of the New Testament (Romans, 1.27-2.15), see METZGER and EHRMAN, 2005: 141

Three subsequent editions were of special importance in the history of the New Testament text. The first, Robert Stephanus's third edition, which was based on Erasmus's text, served as the basis for the King James Version (1611 CE). Stephanus's fourth edition (1551 CE) was the first to number the text in chapters and verses as we find it today. The second, Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor in Geneva, published nine editions from 1565 to 1604 CE, which gave Erasmus's text a seal of approval. Two of his editions were also used in the King James Version. The third, a Greek text very similar to those of Erasmus, Stephanus and Beza, was edited by the Elzevir brothers in 1633 CE. This edition became the standard Greek text in Europe. The term "Received Text" or "Accepted Text" (Textus Receptus, TR) was coined from its mention in the preface to the 1633 CE edition, which led to Erasmus' Greek text being known as the Textus Receptus (Accepted Text). This name remained for over two hundred years, until the appearance of editions based on more collations of Greek manuscripts and the inclusion of more critical apparatus in the 19th century CE.

9. Modern Textual Criticism

The period from 1633 to 1831 CE was characterized by the accumulation of new evidence from Greek manuscripts, translations and patristic authors, of which the collated material was not sufficient to ensure an edition closer to the original. During this period, the dominance of the Textus

Receptus was not shaken, more evidence was gathered, which eventually led to an improved Greek text.

At least three scholars made significant contributions in this period: Bengel, Wettstein and Griesbach. In 1734 CE, J. A. Bengel published a Greek text, reprinting the Textus Receptus, but not based on any individual edition. He for the first time suggested the classification of Greek manuscripts into “text types” (African and Asian) and created a system for evaluating textual variants (superior and inferior). J. J. Wettstein's edition of the text of 1751–52 CE proposed certain principles of textual criticism and used a system for designating manuscripts by symbols. J. J. Griesbach, in his editions from 1774 to 1807 CE, modified Bengel's classification of text types to three (Western, Alexandrian, and Byzantine), defined the basic principles of textual criticism, and showed great skill in evaluating textual variants (his fifteen canons of textual criticism). Although the above works followed the Received or Accepted Text (Textus Receptus), valuable new evidence was relegated to critical notes in the publications.

The period from 1831 to 1881 CE saw the dethronement of the Textus Receptus and the struggle for a new critical edition. The first important break with the Textus Receptus was the publication of the Greek text by Karl Lachmann (1831 CE). His was the first attempt to reconstruct a text from scientific principles, rather than by reproducing the medieval text. In addition, the impressive work of Constantin von Tischendorf brought to light many

unknown manuscripts (e.g., the Codex Sinaiticus). He also published critical editions of the Greek text. The last edition (1871 CE) included a critical apparatus noting all known variants of the uncial manuscripts, minuscules, translations, and patristic writings that had been discovered up to that time. In 1881, two Cambridge scholars, B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, combined their efforts to produce a monumental critical edition of the Greek New Testament in two volumes (1881–82). The text built on the earlier research of Griesbach, Lachmann, and Tischendorf, and created a foundation for further study. The Westcott-Hort text was the basis for the English Revised (1881) and American Standard (1901) versions of the New Testament. In the introduction to the critical edition, F. J. A. Hort blasted the Textus Receptus with three basic arguments against the Byzantine text-type. After careful examination of the early text-types and their variants, Westcott and Hort concluded that the Egyptian text (Sinaitico and Vaticanus, which they termed “neutral”) preserved the original text with minimal alteration. The critical text was therefore based on this neutral text-type, except in cases where the internal evidence was clearly against this text. Subsequent research after Westcott and Hort (1881 CE) was more concerned with refining the reconstruction of the critical text. In 1913, H. von Soden published an extensive work, which included a critical text, an extensive apparatus (a set of critical notes), and lengthy manuscript descriptions. The opponents failed to overturn Hort’s arguments, mentioned above, and failed to succeed in making

a credible defense based on the principles of textual criticism. Although his textual theories have become controversial, von Soden's text is nonetheless a treasure trove of information.

From 1898 CE, pocket editions of the Greek New Testament began to be published under the editorship of Eherhard Nestle (1851-1913), with subsequent editions by his son Erwin Nestle (1883-1972). The 28th edition was published in 2009 (NA28) under the supervision of Barbara and Kurt Aland. These editions have established themselves as the most widely accepted editions in the Christian world since their first publications, as well as they differ much more from the Textus Receptus than the critical edition of Westcott and Hort (for a more in-depth analysis, see: VAGANAY, 1991: 89-171; ALAND et al, 1998: 03-20; MEZTGER and EHRMAN, 2005: 137-94 and for a summary, see: PUSKAS and ROBBINS, 2012: 68-74). Thus, the work of Textual Criticism of the New Testament is to identify the textual variants, as well as the different versions, whose objectives include the identification of transcription errors, whether intentional or involuntary, the analysis of the Greek manuscripts and versions and, finally, to try to reconstruct the text as close as possible to the original, since the autograph manuscripts are not available. The numbers vary, but it is estimated that the New Testament was preserved in more than 5,800 Greek manuscripts, in about 10,000 Latin manuscripts and 9,300 manuscripts in versions for ancient languages, such as Syriac, Slavic, Ethiopic and Armenian, therefore, a monstrous task.

10. The Criteria of Textual Criticism

In view of the facts mentioned above, we are led to question what principles are employed when deciding between variant versions of the same text? What criteria are used to detect the most original version possible? These questions are the concerns of the science of textual criticism. The principles employed in this research method will be described below.

A criterion above all others is the one that makes the researcher's choice at each point of variation, that is, the variation that best explains the origin of all the others is the most likely to be the original. For, in order to best explain the origin of the others, researchers must consider two factors: external evidence (the manuscripts themselves) and internal evidence (the authors and copyists). With regard to external evidence, the researcher must weigh the manuscript evidence that supports each variant. The age, quality and geographic location of the witnesses and their texts that support each variant. All are important considerations in isolating the best versions and their documents.

Internal evidence is of two types: 1) transcriptional probability, which deals with what kind of error or alteration the scribe probably made. 2) intrinsic probability, or what the author is most likely to have written. The detection of transcription errors is based on inductive reasoning. For example, it is often true that the more difficult version is probably the original, since copyists

tended to alter the text to a more readable version. In addition, the shorter version is often the original, since scribes tended to add words to the text (although scribes sometimes made omissions as well).

A variant that differs from a parallel or quoted passage in another book, whether of the New Testament or the Old Testament, is almost always the original, since scribes tended to harmonize, that is, alter, the wording of the manuscript from which the transcription was being reproduced so that this wording would closely match the citation of the same passage in another book of the Bible. Detecting what the author would most likely have said is the most subjective aspect of textual criticism, since it must deal with the author's style, vocabulary, phraseology, and ideas as they are found in another book by the same author and in the immediate context.

Not all of the above criteria are equally applicable in all cases; sometimes they are in conflict with each other. In such impasses, the textual critic is often forced to fall back on external evidence (the manuscripts themselves) as a final arbiter. Most biblical scholars agree that 90 percent of all New Testament textual variants are resolved, since the variant that best explains the origin of the others is also supported by the oldest and best textual witnesses.

11. Some Examples of Variations According to the Confusion with the Greek Letters

In general, terms, the differences present in the manuscripts are divided into involuntary variants and intentional variants. Among the various reasons, in one of the most common examples, involuntary variants, whether due to distraction or negligence on the part of the scribe, occurred due to the difficulty in distinguishing one Greek letter from another. The first manuscripts of the Greek New Testament were written in uncials (capital letters), and not in cursive lowercase letters, and, to make reading difficult, with the words joined together,[13] which increased the confusion. In addition, the difficulty in deciphering the handwriting of the author of the manuscripts from which the copy was being reproduced by the copyist. Another problem in Antiquity was the difficulty in seeing, which caused errors in identifying the letters, since glasses were only invented in Italy, in the 14th century CE, also, many copyists were elderly, with tired eyesight, so the scribes did not have the resource of the lens to improve their vision. Also, electric lighting did not yet exist, so the illumination was through candlelight or oil lamp, whose brightness was not of the same intensity as the illumination through an electric bulb. For example, in difficult handwriting and in a candlelit environment, the Greek capital letters Σ (sigma) and E (epsilon), as well as the letters Θ (theta) and O

[13] For example, see: METZGER and EHRMAN, 2005: 19.

(omicron) could easily be confused. Thus, in 1Timothy 3.16, the oldest manuscripts write ΟΣ (he who), while many of the later manuscripts write ΘΣ (the common abbreviation for Θεός – God). [14]

In addition, the capital letters Γ (gamma), Π (pi), and Τ (tau) were easy to confuse, especially if the horizontal bar in the first and last letters (Γ and Τ) were carelessly drawn or if the right leg of Π (pi) was too short, it could be mistaken for Γ (gamma). Thus, in 2Peter 2:13, some manuscripts read ΑΤΑΠΑΙΣ (ATAPAIS—love feasts), and others read ΑΠΑΤΑΙΣ (APATAIS—deceptions).[15] Likewise, when two letters Λ (lambda) are written too close together, they might be read as the letter Μ (mu), as in Romans 6:5, where most manuscripts render it ΑΛΛΑ (ALLA – but),[16] while others render it ΑΜΑ (AMA – together). When the letter Λ (lambda) is followed too closely by a letter Ι (iota), the combination might be read as the letter Ν (nu), that is, ΛΙ confused with Ν. Thus, in manuscripts of 2Peter 2:18, ΟΛΙΓΩΣ (OLIGOS – scarcely) is

[14] The fourth revised edition of ALAND et al, 1998: 718, reads: Ος (he who). The New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (NRSVUE) translated it into English as "He". The many translations into contemporary languages are divided between the translations "he who" and "God".

[15] In the edition ALAND et al, 1998: 803, the wording is ἀπάταις (apatais – disappointments). From that time on, copies began to be reproduced in lowercase letters, instead of the uncials (capital letters) used in the first centuries.

[16] In the fourth revised edition of ALAND et al, 1998: 533, the wording is ΑΛΛΑ (ALLA – but).

confused with ΟΝΤΩΣ (ONTOS – really),[17] where the letters Τ (tau) and Γ (gamma) are also confused. Sometimes the letters lambda Λ and delta Δ are confused, as in Acts 15:40, where ΕΙΠΛΕΞΑΜΕΝΟΣ (EPILEXAMENOS – having chosen) appears in Codex Bezae as ΕΠΙΔΕΞΑΜΕΝΟΣ (EPIDEXAMENOS – having received).[18] Another confusion is with the abbreviations ΑΠΟΘΥ (short for απο Θεου – from God) and ΑΓΙΟΙΘΥ (short for αγιοι Θεου – saints of God).[19] According to Bruce M. Metzger and Roger L Omanson, the original wording should be ΑΠΟΘΥ (απο Θεου - from God). This is the wording that best explains the later wording ΑΓΙΟΙΘΥ, αγιοι Θεου - the saints of God (METZGER, 1971: 701 and OMANSON, 2010: 515).

The above examples are only of errors resulting from the scribe's poor eyesight at the time of transcription; there are many other reasons that led to errors in manuscript reproduction. There are many variants, and there is no consensus among researchers about the exact number, so it will not be possible to deal with them all here, since what interests us here is only the variant relating to interpolation or omission, as in the case of the Pericope Adulterae (the Pericope of the Adulterous Woman), which may be an interpolation or an

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[17] ALAND 1998: 804 et al, writes ΟΛΙΓΩΣ (OLIGOS – scarcely).

[18] ALAND et al, 1998: 469 writes ἐπιλεξάμενος (epilexamenos - having chosen).

[19] ALAND et al, 1998: 801 writes απο Θεου (apo Theou - from God).

omission. Therefore, to learn more variants, the number is monstrous, which may reach 500 thousand (GURRY, 2016: 12), both involuntary and intentional, accompanied by examples, in the Greek manuscripts, see: VAGANAY, 1991: 52-61; ALAND and ALAND, 1995: 280-97; METZGER and EHRMAN, 2005: 250-71 and, for a summary, see: OMANSON, 2010: xvi-xix.

12. The Number of Variants

The differences are so great that there is no consensus among researchers about the number of variants after comparing Greek manuscripts, only approximate estimates. The first to issue an estimate was John Mill in 1707 CE, who pointed out the presence of 30,000 textual variants in his 30-year work of collecting New Testament manuscripts.[20] After this estimate, the number of variants estimated by other researchers only increased, as research progressed and more manuscripts were compared. See below the reproduction of the list prepared by Peter J. Gurry of the estimates of the last 150 years (GURRY, 2016: 16):

Author	Estimate	Date
F. H. A Scrivener	120 thousand	1861
Philip Schaff	150 thousand	1883

[20] He compared only less than 100 manuscripts, currently the number of existing manuscripts of the New Testament, in full or in fragments, is estimated at 5,600 (GURRY, 2016: 02n3).

William P. Dickson	120 thousand	1886
B. B. Warfield	180-200 thousand	1889
Erza C. von Abbot	150 thousand	1891
Eberhard Nestle	120-150 thousand	1897
Marvin Vicent	150-200 thousand	1899
Adolf Jülicher	30-100 thousand	1904
Ira Maurice Price	150 thousand	1907
Charles Sitterly	200 thousand	1915
Louis Pirot	250 thousand	1934
Léon Vaganay	150-250 thousand	1934
Erwin Nestle	250-300 thousand	1951
Merrill M. Parvis	150-250 thousand	1962
Kenneth W. Clark	300 thousand	1962 and 1966
Raymond F. Collins	200 thousand	1983
Werner Stenger	250 thousand	1983
Léon Vaganay	150-250 thousand	1991
Keith Elliott	300 thousand	1995
Eldon J. Epp	300 thousand	1997 and 1999
Bart D. Ehrman	300 thousand	1997
Antonio Piñedo	250 thousand	2003
Eckhard Schnabel	300 thousand	2004
Eldon J. Epp	500 thousand	2007
Bart D. Ehrman	200-400 thousand	2005
Daniel B. Wallace	300-400 thousand	2006
Harold J. Greenlee	400 thousand	2008
Clinton Baldwin	300 thousand	2010
Eldon J. Epp	400-750 thousand	2011
Daniel B. Wallace	400 thousand	2012
Lee M. McDonald	200-400 thousand	2012
Stanly E. Porter	100-400 thousand	2013
Craig L. Blomberg	200-400 thousand	2014
Eldon J. Epp	400-750 thousand	2014

Peter J. Gurry, after analysing some estimates from other authors and proposing a new methodology for calculating the estimate, estimated that “the number of textual variants in the Greek New Testament (not including spelling differences) is about 500,000” (GURRY: 2016: 12).

13. Interpolations and Omissions in the Text of the Greek New Testament

In addition to the many changes that occurred in the text of the New Testament, with diverse causes, additions and omissions were not few. The reasons may have ranged from the copyist's desire to correct the spelling or grammar of the passage to be copied, to the intentional addition and omission of phrases and words, additions that matched his ideology or sectarianism, or omission to cover up the dissemination of ideas that disagreed with his theological preference, or with his sectarian commitment. Current Textual Criticism is capable of identifying the most obvious interpolations and omissions of passages, as well as the most dubious ones, which are therefore debated.

Among the most extensive and notorious interpolations, in addition to the absence of the Pericope Adulterae (Pericope of the Adulterous Woman) in the oldest and most reliable Greek manuscripts[21] of the Gospel of John (7.53-8.11), the

[21] See the short list of some of the oldest and most important manuscripts that omit this story in METZGER, 1971: 220 and

last verses of the Gospel of Mark (16.9-20) are also suspected of being late interpolations, that is, the original text probably ended in 16.08. This last supposed interpolation is also not present in the oldest and most reliable Greek and Latin manuscripts, as well as, some late manuscripts add two distinct endings to the Gospel of Mark, that is, the shorter ending, with only one verse and the longer ending, the latter with the additional 12 verses 16.09-20, as well as, the wording of this interpolation does not match Mark's redactional style and almost all the verses have redactional variants in the different manuscripts that include the interpolated passage. Thus, Mark 16.09-20 and John 7.53-8.11 (Pericope of the Adulteress) are the

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for more information, see WILLKER, 2011: 04-14. Some of them are: א (Codex Sinaiticus, 4th century), B (Codex Vaticanus, 4th century), L (Codex Regius, 8th century), N (Codex Petropolitanus Purpureus, 6th century), T (Codex Borgianus, 5th century), W (Codex Washingtoniesis, 4th or 5th century), X (Codex Monacensis, 10th century), Y (Codex Macedoniensis, 9th century), and papyri P66 and P75 (both from the 3rd century). Codices A (Alexandrinus) and C (Ephraemi Rescriptus), both from the 5th century, contain the Gospel of John, but the passages corresponding to the story of the adulterous woman are damaged in the manuscripts, there is a gap, even so the researchers claim, after careful measurement, that the corresponding missing space is not enough to contain the entire story of the Pericope, therefore the narrative of the Pericope should not be included in these two manuscripts (see: OMANSON, 2010: 183). Defenders of inclusion argue that the story could be in a note in the margin of the damaged folio, however it is not possible to find proof for this argument.

two most extensive interpolations that we can find in the four gospels (WILLKER, 2011: 26). Regarding the inauthenticity of Mark 16.09-20, Bruce M. Metzger explained it like this: “The entire addition has an indisputable apocryphal flavour. It is probably the work of a second or third century scribe who wished to soften the severe condemnation of the Eleven (apostles) in 16.14” (METZGER, 1971: 125 and for details, see: METZGER, 1971: 122-8; ALAND et al, 1998: 190-2 and OMANSON, 2010: 102-6).

Regarding the Gospel of John, which will interest us here, Juan Chapa pointed out: “There are not even two manuscripts of the Gospel of John that are exactly the same in every passage. Approximately eighty years after its composition, the text presents a diversity of variations. This is confirmed by papyri P66 and P75, which refer us to texts that were certainly in circulation in the last decades of the second century” (CHAPA, 2012: 143). Papyrus P66 is the only papyrus that contains the complete Gospel of John, hence its importance due to its antiquity (3rd century) and completeness; the other papyri that include this gospel have survived only in fragments. The oldest manuscripts on parchment or vellum that contain the complete Gospel of John are א (Codex Sinaiticus) 4th century; B (Codex Vaticanus) 4th century; A (Codex Alexandrinus) 5th century; C (Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus) 5th century and D (Codex Bezae) 5th century.

14. The Controversy over the Pericope Adulterae

The literature on the study of the Pericope of the Adulteress (PA) is extensive and is full of speculative theories and suppositions, some quite imaginative, due to the scarcity of evidence, therefore there are more speculations than duly proven facts, so that here we will limit ourselves to those that are most proven, leaving aside the numerous dubious theories, which are, most of the time, developed from vague clues. An example of a speculative theory is the attempt to find a reference to the PA in the 2nd century CE, which is pure supposition, based on the mention of the phrase "neither do I condemn you" (οὐδὲ ἐγώ κρινω υμας - oude ego krino umas),[22] in the Protoevangelium of James XVI.03, a work dated to the 2nd century CE. (Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus – METZGER and EHRMAN, 2005: 58 and 59), which was also said by Jesus, with a slight difference in wording, in the PA (John 8.11 - οὐδὲ ἐγώ σε κατακρίνω - oude ego se katakrino), but in the Protoevangelium it was pronounced by a judge during a trial, through an ordeal, of Joseph and Mary, Jesus' parents, as a reference to the PA in the 2nd century CE, it is far from being evidence (see: KEITH, 2009: 208). After

[22] Bart Ehrman and Bruce M. Metzger translated οὐδὲ ἐγώ κρινω υμας as "Neither do I judge you" (METZGER and EHRMAN, 2005:58 and 59). The verb κρινω (krino) is polysemic, while the verb κατακρίνω (κατα + κρίνω), is more specific in the sense of sentencing, judging and condemning.

all, researchers in the religious field are, usually, prone to confusing clues with proof, due to their less sceptical training. Therefore, if the reader is interested, knowledge of these theories can be found in the works suggested in parentheses or in the bibliography listed at the end of this study.

As mentioned above, among the countless redactional and textual changes that occur frequently in the New Testament, we are only interested in the changes of

interpolation or omission, specifically the discussed case of interpolation or omission of the Pericope Adulterae (Pericope of the Adulteress - PA). Whether it is an interpolation in the later manuscripts or an omission in the oldest manuscripts will be what we will discuss from now on. The passage appears in the Gospel of John 7.53-8.11 in most of the manuscripts where it is present. Even among those that include this passage, there are divergences in the wording of almost all of the verses. For example, in order to satisfy the curiosity of what Jesus wrote on the ground in John 8.08, some manuscripts interpolated the phrase “the sins of each of them” (METZGER, 1971: 222). On the other hand, it is omitted in all the oldest Greek manuscripts, and it is also absent from the first translations (Syriac, Sahidic, Bohairic, Armenian, Georgian, Gothic and various manuscripts of Old Latin). For this reason, some editions of the Bible, translated into contemporary

languages, point out, through a note,[23] that the originality of the passage is doubtful, and therefore controversial among scholars, since not all translations recognize its originality, so that most Christians are unaware of the problem,[24] nor are priests and pastors interested in disclosing this textual ambiguity to the faithful.

The doubt is not only noted in current and recent printed Bibles, but also in the manuscripts themselves, both ancient and medieval, which also indicate doubts as to authenticity and location, which resulted in confusion at the time of

[23] Or in square brackets, as in the 27th edition of Nestle-Aland (ALAND et. al. 1998: 347-8). In manuscripts where originality is suspected, the passage is marked with square brackets, an asterisk or obelis, the latter of which could be a minus sign, a dividing sign, an arrow or a pyramidal needle. Chris Keith noted that 195 manuscripts (from the ninth to the eighteenth centuries) mention doubts about the textual status of the Pericope of the Adulteress (KEITH, 2009: 133n61).

[24] Some editions in contemporary languages that note the ambiguity of the passage are: the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition, NRSVUE, 2021 and the New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition, NRSVCE, 1993, which note that “the oldest manuscripts omit the passage 7.53-8.11, other manuscripts add it after John 7.35 or after 21.25, or after Luke 21.38, with variations in the text, some manuscripts observe the passage as dubious. In addition, the Jerusalem Bible notes, “this pericope (7.53 – 8.11), omitted by the oldest testimonies (manuscripts, translations and quotations of the fathers), and disregarded by others, with a synoptic colouring style, cannot be from Saint John himself. It could be attributed to Saint Luke, see Luke 21.38.

handwritten reproduction. So the copyists, either omitted the passage, or reproduced it, but marked the ambiguity with critical signs or, alternatively, reproduced the passage, but located it in another place in the text, hence the diversity of locations for the Pericope of the Adulteress (PA). Chris Keith, citing Metzger, pointed out “in many manuscripts that report the passage, it is marked with asterisks or with obelis, indicating that, although the scribes included the account, they were aware that it lacked satisfactory credentials”. He also cited the curious case in which the copyist of Manuscript 565 pointed out in a note that he purposely did not include the Pericope, although the manuscript from which he copied included the passage and, instead, he copied the story at the end of the Gospel of John, probably because he was confused (KEITH, 2009: 134). Given this confusing picture, it was easy for copyists to omit it, or locate it in different positions in the gospels.

15. Greek Text and Translation of the Adulterous Pericope (John 7.53-8.11)

Based on the 27th revised edition of Nestle-Aland, the Greek text is as follows:

7.53 καὶ ἐπορεύθησαν ἕκαστος εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ,
8.1 ἰησοῦς δὲ ἐπορεύθη εἰς τὸ ὄρος τῶν ἐλαιῶν. 2 ὄρθρου δὲ πάλιν παρεγένετο εἰς τὸ ἱερόν, καὶ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς ἤρχετο πρὸς αὐτόν, καὶ καθίσας ἐδίδασκεν αὐτούς. 3 κατειλημμένην, καὶ στήσαντες αὐτὴν ἐν μέσῳ 4 λέγουσιν αὐτῷ, διδάσκαλε, αὕτη ἡ γυνὴ κατείληπται ἐπ᾽ αὐτοφώρῳ μοιχευομένη·5 ἐν δὲ τῷ

νόμῳ ἡμῖν μωϊσῆς ἐνετείλατο τὰς τοιαύτας λιθάζειν· σὺ οὖν τί λέγεις; 6 τοῦτο δὲ ἔλεγον πειράζοντες αὐτόν, ἵνα ἔχωσιν κατηγορεῖν αὐτοῦ. ὁ δὲ ἰησοῦς κάτω κύψας τῶ δακτύλῳ κατέγραφεν εἰς τὴν γῆν.7 ὡς δὲ ἐπέμενον ἐρωτῶντες αὐτόν, ἀνέκυψεν καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, ὁ ἀναμάρτητος ὑμῶν πρῶτος ἐπ᾽ αὐτὴν βαλέτω λίθον· 8 καὶ πάλιν κατακύψας ἔγραφεν εἰς τὴν γῆν.9 οἱ δὲ ἀκούσαντες ἐξήρχοντο εἷς καθ᾽ εἷς ἀρξάμενοι ἀπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, 10 καὶ κατελείφθη μόνος, καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἐν μέσῳ οὖσα. γύναι, ποῦ εἰσιν; οὐδείς σε κατέκρινεν; 11 ἡ δὲ εἶπεν, οὐδείς, κύριε. Εἶπεν δὲ ὁ ἰησοῦς, οὐδὲ ἐγώ σε κατακρίνω· πορεύου, [καὶ] ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μηκέτι ἁμάρτανε.

In addition, based on the most reliable translations, this passage could be translated like this:

7.53. Then each of them went home, 8.01 while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 2 Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and began to teach them. 3 The scribes and Pharisees brought in a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand before them all. 4 They said to him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. 5 Now, the Law of Moses commands us to stone such a woman. Now what do you say?” 6 They said this to test him, so that they might have some accusation against him. Jesus bent down and wrote on the ground with his finger. 7 When they continued to question him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone

at her". 8 Once more, he bent down and wrote on the ground. 9 When they heard this, they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. 10 Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Hasn't someone condemned you?" 11 She said, 'No one, sir.' In addition, Jesus said: 'Neither do I condemn you, go your way and from now on sin no more' (WILLKER, 2011: 03; ALAND et. al., 1998: 347-8 and with comments, see: KEITH, 2009: 161-72).

16. Variations: Inclusions and Exclusions

The differences between the manuscripts range from the presence or absence of the PA[25] in the four gospels, to differences in its location in the Gospel of John or in other gospels, to variations in the texts and wording of the manuscripts that include it. Since there are numerous differences between the manuscripts that include the PA, it took a lot of work to compare several manuscripts and testimonies in order to arrive at the Critical Edition of this passage. As a result, the wording of the oldest Greek manuscript that includes the PA, Codex D (Codex Bezae), differs considerably from the wording of the 27th Critical Edition by Nestlé-Aland (1998). Wieland Willker prepared a synoptic table comparing the wording of the Pericope of the Adulteress in Codex D and in the 27th Critical Edition of Nestlé-Aland, marking the different

[25] PA = Pericope of the Adulteress (Pericope Adulterae).

passages with coloured letters, see WILKKER, 2011: 33-4. The omitted manuscripts are: P66, P75, א, A vid, B, C vid, L, N, T, W, 1241, 1424, pm 260, it (a, f, l *, q), Sy, sa, bo pt, pbo, ac 2, arm mss, geo mss, aeth, goth, Ir, Cl, Or, Chrys, Tert, Cyp, Hier mss, Aug mss. Those with gaps due to manuscript damage are P45, A, C, 070, however, based on careful measurements, it is highly unlikely that these damaged manuscripts included the Pericope. Manuscript W/32 has a blank page between the end of the Gospel of John and the beginning of the Gospel of Luke, and no spaces appear between Matthew and John or between Luke and Mark[26]. This may indicate knowledge of the PA.[27] After reconstruction, it is concluded that manuscript P45 is highly unlikely to have contained the PA. A (Codex Alexandrinus) has a gap between 6.50-8.52, so it is quite certain that it did not contain the PA, as the missing space fits exactly into a space without the PA. Manuscript C (Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus) has a gap between 7.03-8-36, also highly unlikely to have contained the PA. Coptic manuscript 070 has passages 7.42-8.12 without the PA, and the Greek manuscript includes only 7.3-12 and 8.13-22, omitting the PA. Some of the earliest that include it are: D, d, e (5th century); Alexandrian Greek and Old Latin manuscripts (6th–7th centuries); E, (L), 047, 0233 (8th century); F, G, H,

[26] Note that this manuscript does not follow the traditional order of the Gospels.

[27] The Pericope of the Adulteress is hereinafter reproduced by the initials PA for brevity.

K, Π, M, U, V, (Δ); Λ, Ω (9th century); and S, Γ (10th century). The manuscripts marked in parentheses, L and Δ, contain a large gap, indicating that they knew the PA. Manuscript 047 omits verses 7.53-8.02, manuscript F has a gap from verse 7.28 to 8.10, manuscript Π has a gap from 8.06 to 8.44, manuscript W32 and manuscripts E, M, S, Λ, Π, Ω, 1424 and pm270 mark the passage corresponding to the PA with critical signs, indicating that the originality is doubtful.

17. Textual and Redactional Variations

Even among the manuscripts that include the PA, the textual and editorial contents are not identical. The comparison leads to the perception that, while phrases and words are added in some and omitted in others, these are the textual variations. In addition, the wording of the verses does not coincide, especially the exchange of one word for another, as well as a phrase appearing in different verses. See some examples.

John 8.03 - the manuscripts D (Codex Bezae) and 1071 replace the word μοιχείᾳ - moixeia (adultery) with another less specific one: αμαρτιαα - amartia (error, deception), probably in order to soften the woman's action and thus justify Jesus' forgiveness in 8.11.

8.06 – the phrase: τοῦτο δὲ ἔλεγον πειράζοντες αὐτόν, ἵνα ἔχωσιν κατηγορεῖν αὐτοῦ “They said this to test him, so that they might have some accusation against him”, appears in 8.04 in some manuscripts, mostly in 8.06, still others in 8.08 or 8.11. 8.08 – in

order to satisfy curiosity concerning what Jesus wrote on the ground, the manuscripts U, Π, 73, 331, 364, 700, 782, 1592 and arm mss add after the word γην – gen (on the ground) the phrase: “the sins of each of them”.
8.09 – οἱ δὲ ἀκούσαντες ἐξήρχοντο εἷς καθ’ εἷς “When they heard this, they went away one by one”, the Textus Receptus added a comment that the woman’s accusers were “reproved by their own conscience”. In addition, the wording πρεσβυτέρων – presbiteron (elders) was expanded in some manuscripts by adding phrases such as “even the last” and “as soon as they all went out”, to indicate that all those who accused the woman left.
8.10 – the verse was expanded by adding several phrases that refer to Jesus looking at the woman, such as “and seeing no one except the woman”. Also, the phrase “those her accusers” does not appear in all manuscripts (METZGER, 1971: 222-3; OMANSON, 2010: 185 and for more details, see: WILLKER, 2011: 35-50).

18. The First Narratives by the Fathers

The oldest is that of Didymus the Blind (313–398 CE), a priest and theologian who wrote commentaries on the Old Testament. We know his work today thanks to the discovery of his manuscripts during the construction of an artificial cave in 1941 in Egypt. His reproduction of the PA account appears in his Greek commentary on Ecclesiastes 7:21–22, with some differences,

especially omissions, when compared with the account in John 7:53–8:11:

“We find, then, in certain gospels (the following story). A woman, it is said, was condemned by the Jews for a sin and was being led to be stoned in the place where this usually happened. The Saviour, it is said, when he saw her and observed that they were about to stone her, said to those who were about to throw the stones. ‘He who is without sin, let him pick up a stone and throw it.’ If someone is conscious in himself that he has not sinned, let him pick up a stone and punish her. In addition, no one dared. Since they knew in themselves and realized that they themselves were guilty of some things, they did not dare to stone her” (EHRMAN, 2006: 199; KEITH, 2009: 206 and WILLKER, 2011: 16).

The phrase “in certain gospels” is important for Textual Criticism, since it points to the fact that the PA was not present in all the manuscripts he knew at the time. Didymus lived in Alexandria, an important cultural centre in Antiquity; therefore, with this we realize that there were manuscripts in that city that had and those that did not have the PA in the 4th century CE. Due to the differences with John 7:53-8:11, two hypotheses are likely: either the narrative reproduced by Didymus was taken from memory, he must not have been in front of a manuscript, or, if he was in front of a manuscript, the versions of the narratives were different in the manuscripts he used. Didymus did not mention whether the PA was in the Gospel of John. Bart Ehrman suggested that Didymus reproduced the story of the PA from the Gospel of the Hebrews

(EHRMAN, 2006: 219). Everything indicates that, before the end of the 4th century CE, the story of the PA was already recognized as canonical and was already incorporated into some manuscripts, since Jerome includes it in his translation into Latin, the Vulgate, in the Gospel of John 7:53-8:11, in 384 CE.

Another ancient narrative appears in the Didascalia Apostolorum (Disciplines of the Apostles), a work originally in Greek from the 3rd century CE. attributed to the authorship of the twelve Apostles, but by reading it is easy to recognize that it is a late work from about the year 300 CE. It no longer exists complete in Greek; the complete preserved manuscripts are the Syriac versions. The story of the PA is related thus: “For you do not obey our Saviour and our God, to do the same as He did to her who had sinned, whom the elders placed before Him left the judgment in His hands, and departed. However, He, the Searcher of Hearts, asked her and said, Have the elders condemned you, my daughter? She said to Him: No one Lord, and He said to her, Go your way, neither do I condemn you” (Didascalia Apostolorum VII.2.23.15-25 - CONNOLLY, 1929: 76; also: KEITH, 2009: 207; EHRMAN, 2006: 210 and WILLKER, 2011: 16).

Therefore, it is difficult to know whether these shorter accounts are merely summaries of a longer story, which until then was known only orally and was therefore very subject to changes by the speakers, or whether they are older versions of the story that were previously shorter and were

lengthened over time, or even whether the authors did not have a manuscript of the account in front of them and reproduced the story from memory, that is, only what they remembered. Despite their brevity, these ancient versions present differences with the consolidated PA in the Gospel of John. For example, in John's PA the adulteress had not been condemned by the Jews, nor in the account of the Didascalia, whereas in Didymus' account she had been condemned by the Jews: "A woman, it is said, was condemned by the Jews for a sin." In addition, in Didymus and the Didascalia, it is mentioned that the woman committed a sin, without specifying which sin, whereas in John's PA the sin is specified, that is, the sin of adultery.

Regarding the variants of the PA, Bart D. Ehrman summarized, “By the fourth century CE, there were in fact three extant versions of the PA. (1) the story of the imprisonment in which Jesus freely forgives the sinful woman, known to Papias and the author of the Didascalia, (2) the story of Jesus’ intervention in an execution procedure, preserved in the Gospel According to the Hebrews and related by Didymus in his commentary on Ecclesiastes, and (3) the popular version found in the manuscripts of the Gospel of John, a version that represents the confluence of two older stories” (EHRMAN, 2006: 219). Despite all my admiration for Bart D. Ehrman’s work, I recognize that his conclusion is still hypothetical, since it is not possible to conclude what these versions were like in the fourth century CE, with so few sources of information about them (Papias, Didascalia, Gospel

of the Hebrews, and Didymus), especially if they circulated through oral transmission, that we are not sure whether the story was being told in its entirety or being added for the purpose of catechesis. These older versions only convey clues.

Wieland Wilker reproduced a later version found in Codex Edschmiadzim 229, from the year 989 CE: “A certain woman was caught in sins against whom all testified that she deserved death. They brought her to Jesus (to see) what he would order, so that they could incriminate him. Jesus answered and said, ‘Come, you who are without sin, throw the stones and stone her to death”. But, he himself, bowing his head, was writing with his finger on the ground, to declare their sins, and they were visualizing their sins on the stones. And, filled with shame, they departed, and no one remained but the woman only; Jesus said, ‘Go in peace, and offer the offering for sins, just as it is written in their law.’ (WILLKER, 2011: 17).

19. The Different Locations

Although the overwhelming majority of Greek manuscripts (1,370 of the 1,428 manuscripts, or 95.9%) locate the PA in John 7:53–8:11, only 58 manuscripts locate it elsewhere. The variations in location may range from other locations in the Canonical Gospels to mentions by the ancient Fathers that it was present in an apocryphal gospel. Papias (2nd century CE) and Eusebius (265–339 CE) mentioned that the PA was found in the Gospel According to the Hebrews. Augustine and Jerome

located it in John 7:53–8:11, but acknowledged that it was not present in all the manuscripts known to them at the time. In a note, Chris Keith noted that "of the surviving manuscript fragments of the Gospel of the Hebrews, none include the PA", and the current debate discusses "in which of the Gospels of the Hebrews (Gospel According to the Hebrews, Gospel of the Ebonites and Gospel of the Nazarenes) the PA was present, as Papias and Eusebius knew it in the past" (KEITH, 2009: 131 and 131n52). In his research, Chris Keith found twelve different locations for the PA in the manuscripts (KEITH, 2009: 120-1):

1. In John 7.53-8.11 (the vast majority, 95.9%)
2. In John 21.25
3. After John 7.44
4. After John 8.12
5. Between the end of the Gospel of Luke and the beginning of the Gospel of John
6. After Luke 21.36
7. After John 8.12a
8. After John 7.36
9. After John 10.36
10. After John 8.20
11. After John 8.13 and
12. After John 8.14a

In addition to being the majority, the location in John 7.53-8.11[28] is the oldest. The oldest Greek manuscript to include it is Codex D (also known as

[28] Of those manuscripts that include it in John's Gospel 7:53-8:11, only a small number of eighteen of them include it in 7:52-8:02, thus omitting the rest of the story.

Codex Bezae) from about 400 CE. The other manuscripts that include it in John 7:53–8:11 are from the 7th to 15th centuries CE, with the majority dating from the 12th century CE. The oldest Latin manuscripts that include it in this place are those of the Old Latin tradition, manuscripts “e” and ff² from the 5th century CE. Wieland Willker summarized it thus: “The oldest manuscripts that actually include the PA are: D, b*, d, e, ff², all from the 5th century CE. Several Latin Church fathers from the 4th century CE onwards knew of the PA in the Gospel of John. It is not mentioned by any Greek father before the 12th century CE (except Didymus and the church history attributed to Zacharias Rhetor). Jerome mentioned it, around 415 CE, that Greek and Latin manuscripts possessed the Pericope. Thus, the PA was clearly present in the Latin codices and, most likely, in the Greek codices in the second half of the 4th century CE. From this we can conclude that the PA entered the Greek manuscripts probably sometime in the 3rd and 4th centuries CE, probably first in the West. This does not mean, on the other hand, that the story was unknown before this time. We have seen that Papias already knew it and that it is included in the Didascalia Apostolorum in its Syrian translation, from the 3rd century CE (WILLKER, 2011: 15).[29]

When we try to find the earliest evidence for the location of the PA in the quotations of the

[29] For a list of manuscript comments that place the Pericope of the Adulteress in locations other than John 7:53-8:11, see: WILLKER, 2011: 15s.

ancient Fathers, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine offer the most helpful information. Ambrose confirms its location in the Gospel of John, without specifying the location within that gospel,[30] while Jerome and Augustine were specific in locating it in John 7:53-8:11. Ambrose in his Epistle 68, dated 385-387 CE, claimed that the PA was located in the Gospel of John, without specifying the exact location, noting also that this passage was well known in the Christian communities of his day. In one passage of this Epistle, he spoke of "the woman who in the Gospel according to John was brought to Christ accused of adultery." From this, it is clear that Ambrose was familiar with the Pericope of the Adulteress in the Gospel of John. And in Epistle 64, Ambrose said, "Go your way, and from now on, sin no more".[31]

Shortly before Ambrose, Jerome had already included the PA in John 7:53-8:11 in his Latin translation (Vulgate) of the Bible in 384 CE. According to Jerome, in his time there were many manuscript copies, both Greek and Latin that had the PA in the Gospel of John. However, he noted that not all of the manuscripts he used in his translation included it. Augustine, likewise,

[30] It must be remembered that in ancient manuscripts, the enumeration of chapters and verses was not used, as it is used today, which happened for the first time in the fourth printed edition of the Greek text by Stephanus in 1551 CE. Therefore, current researchers of ancient manuscripts are forced to deduce the location of a passage by identifying the context in which the passage is found.

[31] Last sentence of the Pericope of the Adulteress in John 8:11.

mentioned the inclusion of the PA in John 7:53-8:11, so, like Jerome, he noted that not all manuscripts included it. Augustine was convinced that the PA was part of the gospels, and so he observed: “some men of superficial faith, or rather, some hostile to the true faith, fearing, as I believe, that liberty to sin with impunity might be granted to their wives, remove from their biblical texts the account of our Lord’s forgiveness of the adulteress” (KEITH, 2009: 210). Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland believed that the PA “must have been admitted in parts into the Greek gospel tradition sometime in the second century, a period when there was greater freedom with the text” (ALAND and ALAND, 1995: 307). If the older the text, the greater the textual manipulation, then, since the older the text, the fewer the surviving texts, it will therefore be difficult to assess how much the New Testament texts had already been altered by the time of the first manuscript reproductions. It is even worse in the early period of oral transmission, when manipulation is even easier, and therefore it is impossible to know how much the memorized texts were altered at the beginning, when they were handwritten.

The texts of the first verses of PA 7.53 and 8.01-2 in the Gospel of John, present similarities with the passage in Luke 21.37-8.

PA 7.53: “Then each of them went home, 8.01 while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 8.02 Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and began to teach them.”

Luke 21.37: “Every day he was teaching in the temple, and in the evening he would go out and spend the night on the Mount of Olives, as the mountain was called”.
21.38: “And all the people got up early in the morning to hear him in the temple”. These similarities may have been the reason why the PA was included after Luke 21.38 in the f13 manuscript, instead of John 7.53-8.11 (WILLKER, 2011: 20).

Finally, both the manuscript evidence and the patristic evidence confirm that the earliest location for the PA is in John 7.53-8.11. For, Codex D, the Vulgate and the Old Latin tradition offer sufficient external evidence for this location, from the 380s CE onwards (see: KEITH, 2009: 120-40).

20. Inauthenticity

The external and internal evidence that the PA is not an original work by the author of the Gospel of John, but rather a late interpolation by an unknown copyist, is abundant, and it is beset by historical and literary problems. Bruce M. Metzger observed: “when one adds to this impressive and diverse list[32] of external evidence the consideration that the style and vocabulary of the Pericope differ markedly from that of the rest of the Fourth Gospel, and that it interrupts the sequence of 7.52-8.12, the case against its being authored by the composer of

[32] For a list of the oldest and best manuscripts that omit the Pericope of the Adulteress, see METZGER 1971: 220, as well as those that include it, see: WILLKER, 2011: 04-14).

the Gospel of John seems conclusive" (METZGER, 1971: 220). The inauthentic origin of this passage is almost unanimous among scholars (see also EHRMAN 2006: 196; KEITH, 2009: 131 and OMANSON, 2010: 183). That is, in addition to the PA not appearing in the oldest and best manuscripts (external evidence), the internal evidence that it is not the work of the same composer of the Gospel of John is clear, therefore the inauthenticity can be attested, both by external evidence (ancient manuscripts that do not include it), and by internal evidence (differences in editorial characteristics when compared with the author of the Gospel of John). Therefore, for Bruce M. Metzger: "The evidence for the non-Johannine origin of the Pericope of the Adulteress is overwhelming" (METZGER, 1971: 119). Bart D. Ehrman also observed, "The story of Jesus and the Adulteress (John 7.53-8.11) is immersed in literary and historical problems, many of which seem insoluble. On only two points, there is a scholarly consensus: the passage is not originally part of the Fourth Gospel and it presents a close similarity to the synoptic traditions about Jesus, particularly from Luke. The arguments in favour of these conclusions are overwhelming..." (EHRMAN, 2006: 197).

Therefore, for the sake of example, see below a comparison between some Greek words and phrases present in the PA, which also appear frequently in the Gospel of Luke and in the Acts of the Apostles, to get an idea of how the PA has much of the style of the author of Luke, therefore further confirmation that it is an interpolation.

John 8:01 - ὄρος τῶν ἐλαιῶν – oros ton elaion – Mount of Olives, 4 times in Luke
8:02 - ὄρθρου – orthrou - early in the morning, once in Luke and once in Acts
8:02 - πᾶς ὁ λαὸς – pas o laos – all the people, 3 times in Luke
8:02 - καθίσας – kathisas - having sat down, 4 times in Luke
8:03 - οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ φαρισαῖοι – oi grammateis kai oi farisaioi – the scribes and Pharisees, 3 times in Luke
8.07 - ἐπέμενον – epimenon – continued, 6 times in Acts
8.10 - ἀνακύψας – anakupsas – rose up, 2 times in Luke
8.10 - κατέκρινεν – katekrinen – condemned, 3 times in Luke
8.10 – πλην – plen – except, 15 times in Luke[33]
8.11 - ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν – apo tou nun – from now on, 5 times in Luke and once in Acts[34] (WILLKER, 2011: 23).

Other preferred words of Luke that appear in the AP:
πορεύου – poreuou – go, John 8.11
λαὸς – laos – people – John 8.02
ἄγουσιν – agoudin – brought, 8.03

[33] This Greek word (πλην – plen) does not appear in the 27th edition of Nestlé-Aland, but is present, for example, in the Greek text used for the English translation of the King James Bible.
[34] This Greek phrase, present in the 27th Nestlé-Aland edition, does not appear in some editions.

ἐρωτῶντες – erotontes – questioning, 8.07 (WILLKER, 2011: 23).

Well, a sceptic might object that the same words are habitually used by different texts and by different authors, so it is natural that they are repeated by different authors. Strictly speaking, what is being judged in these passages is not the writing, but rather the writing style, that is, what is called phraseology in the literature. A sentence can be written using different vocabulary and in different styles, orders and synonyms, depending on the author's choice, especially in grammatically rich and polysemic languages such as Greek, Latin and Sanskrit. Therefore, each author has his own style, which may be the most frequent use of a set of words or phrases, according to his habit or preference. The Greek language is rich in synonyms and writing style options; the usual order of constructing sentences is enough to identify the author's style. As an example, we will show below, by comparing the Greek and Latin translations of different manuscripts, where it will be possible to perceive in the author's style how the same meaning can be expressed through different words and through different syntactic constructions, which characterizes the author's style. Well, these are just a few examples; other traits may determine an author's style, such as the refinement or lack thereof of his or her language.

21. The Interruption of a Dialogue

Another piece of evidence that the PA in John 7:53-8:11 is an interpolation is the fact that it interrupts a dialogue and a sermon by Jesus. For, if we put together the passages 7:37-52 with the passage after the PA, that is, from 8:12 onwards, we will observe that the sequence fits very well, see:

7:37 On the last day of the feast, that great day, as Jesus was standing there, he cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, 38 and let him who believes in me drink. As the Scripture says, 'Out of the heart of the believer will flow rivers of living water.'" 39 Now he said this about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet there, because Jesus had not yet been glorified. 40 When they heard this, some of the crowd said, "This is truly the Prophet." 41 Others said, "This is the Messiah." But some of them said, “Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee? 42 Doesn’t Scripture say that the Messiah is a descendant of David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?” 43 Then the crowd was divided because of him. 44 Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him. 45 Then the temple guards went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why didn’t you arrest him?” 46 The guards replied, “No one has ever spoken like that!” 47 Then the Pharisees replied, “Surely you too have not been deceived? 48 Has anyone from the authorities or from the Pharisees believed in him? 49 But this crowd, which does not know the law, is accursed”. 50 Nicodemus,

who had come to Jesus before, and who was one of them, asked, 51 “Our law does not judge people without first hearing them to find out what they are doing, does it?” 52 They answered, “Surely you are not from Galilee either? Search and you will see that no prophet will arise from Galilee” (omitting the PA: 7.53 – 8.11). 8:12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” 13 Then the Pharisees said to him, “You are testifying on your own behalf; your testimony is not valid.”

Therefore, the passage beginning at 8.12 is a continuation of the previous episode in 7.37-52, which is why the PA presents the signs of being an interpolation inserted in the middle of a dialogue between Jesus and the crowd. The opening phrase of 8.12 πάλιν οὖν αὐτοῖς ἐλάλησεν ὁ ἰησοῦς (Again, Jesus spoke to them) is clear proof that it is the continuation of a previous dialogue, both the presence of the adverb πάλιν – palin (again) and the phrase αὐτοῖς ἐλάλησεν ὁ ἰησοῦς (Jesus spoke to them) are evidence that it is the continuation of a dialogue, because if it were in another context or in another circumstance, it would be necessary to specify to whom Jesus was speaking, so the pronoun αὐτοῖς (to them, them) would not specify who Jesus was talking to, and consequently it would not fit in this sentence. Furthermore, 8.12 cannot be the continuation of the PA, since in 8.09 it is mentioned, “when they heard this, they went away, one by one, beginning with the eldest, and Jesus was left alone...”, therefore there was no one left for

Jesus to speak to, except the woman forgiven by him. Therefore, the plural pronoun in the dative case αὐτοῖς (to them, them) would not make sense.

22. Comparison of the Greek Text (NA27) with Some Major Latin Manuscripts

Just as the Greek manuscripts that include the PA do not agree in their texts and wording, the same is true of the Latin manuscripts that include it. See below a comparative diagram of the Greek text (NA27) with four important Latin manuscripts, reproducing the wording of all the verses of each of the selected manuscripts, accompanied by translations. So that the reader can compare both the translation from Greek to Latin, as well as the similarities and differences in the text and wording when comparing each of them. The differences range from disagreements in the translations into Latin, to the omission or interpolation of phrases or words, to small differences in spelling and the replacement of synonyms, the latter of which make the wording different but do not alter the meaning. However, it should be noted that the differences are not always in the translation or reproduction due to copyist error, since we do not know the wording of the manuscripts that these Latin translators used at the time of translation, since the translations into Latin were not made from just one Greek manuscript. In addition, the Latin translators consulted other previous translations at the time of their translation.

In addition to the Greek text, some of the important Latin manuscripts compared here are:
Jerome's Vulgate, 4th century CE;
Manuscript "e" (Codex Palatinus), 5th century CE;
Manuscript "d" (Codex Cantabrigienses), 6th century CE.
Manuscript ff2 (Codex Corbeienses), 5th-6th century

PA John 7.53
NA27 Greek text: καὶ ἐπορεύθησαν ἕκαστος εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ (Then each of them went home).
Vulgate: et reuersi sunt unusquisque in domum suam (And they returned each to his own house)
Manuscript “e”: et abierunt singuli ad domos suas (And everyone went to their homes)
Manuscript “d”: et duxerunt se unusquisque in domum suam (And each one went to his own house)
Manuscript ff2: et reuersi sunt unusquisque in domum suam (And they returned each to his own home)

John 8.01
Greek text: ἰησοῦς δὲ ἐπορεύθη εἰς τὸ ὄρος τῶν ἐλαιῶν (as Jesus went to the Mount of Olives)
Vulgate: Iesus autem perrexit in montem oliueti (And Jesus went to the mountain of the olive grove)
Manuscript “e”: Iesus autem abiit in montem oliueti (And Jesus went to the mountain of the olive grove)
Manuscript “d”: Iesus autem abiit in montem oliuarum (And Jesus went to the olive grove mountain)

Manuscript ff2: Iesus autem ascendit in montem oliueti (E Jesus climbed the mountain of the olive grove)

John 8.02a
Greek text: ὄρθρου δὲ πάλιν παρεγένετο εἰς τὸ ἱερόν (Early in the morning he came again to the temple)
Vulgate: et diluculo iterum uenit in templum (And early in the morning he returned to the temple)
Manuscript “e”: deluculo autem reuersus est in templum (however he returned to the temple early in the morning)
Manuscript “d”: mane autem iterum uenit in templum (But in the morning he returned to the temple)
Manuscript ff2: et mane cum factum esset iterum uenit in templum (And when morning came, he returned to the temple)

John 8.02b
Greek text: καὶ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς ἤρχετο πρὸς αὐτόν, καὶ καθίσας ἐδίδασκεν αὐτούς. (And all the people came to him, and he sat down and began to teach them.
Vulgate: et omnis populus uenit ad eum et sedens docebat eos (And all the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them.)
Manuscript “e”: et omnis plebs ueniebat ad eum et sedens docebat eos (And all the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them.)
Manuscript “d”: et omnis populus ueniebat ad eum (And all the people came to him.) Manuscript ff2: et uniuersus populus conueniebant ad eum et cum

consedisset docebat eos (And all the people gathered around him, and he sat down and taught them.)

John 8:03
Greek text: ἄγουσιν δὲ οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ φαρισαῖοι γυναῖκα ἐπὶ μοιχείᾳ κατειλημμένην, καὶ στήσαντες αὐτὴν ἐν μέσῳ (The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, making her stand before everyone)
Vulgate: adducunt autem scribae et pharisaei muli erem in adulterio deprehensam et statuerunt eam in medium. (And the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and set her in their midst.)
Manuscript “e”: et adduxerunt autem scribae et farisaei mulierem in adulterio depraehensam et cum statuissent eam in medio (And the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and set her in the midst)
Manuscript “d”: adducunt autem scribae et pharisaei in peccato muliere mulierem conpraehensam et statuentes eam in Médio (And the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman caught in sin, and set her in their midst)
Manuscript ff2: scribae autem et pharisei adducunt ad eum mulierem in moecationem deprehensam quam cum statuissent in medio (And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and they set her in the midst)

John 8:4
Greek text: λέγουσιν αὐτῷ, διδάσκαλε, αὕτη ἡ γυνὴ κατείληπται ἐπ᾽ αὐτοφώρῳ μοιχευομένη· (They said to him, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery’)
Vulgate: et dixerunt ei magister haec mulier modo deprehensa est in adultery (And they said to him, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery’)
Manuscript “e”: dixerunt Illi magister haec mulier depraehensa est sponte moecata (They said to him, ‘Master, this woman was caught in adultery’)
Manuscript “d”: dicunt illi temptantes eum priestes ut haberent accusare eum magister haec mulier conpr aehensa est palam in adultery (The priests, tempting him, said to him: "Master, this woman has been caught in adultery")
Manuscript ff2: dixerunt ad Iesum magister haec mulier deprehensa est in moecatione (They said to Jesus, "Master, this woman was caught in adultery")

John 8.05
Greek text: ἐν δὲ τῷ νόμῳ ἡμῖν μωϊσῆς ἐνετείλατο τὰς τοιαύτας λιθάζειν· σὺ οὖν τί λέγεις; (Now, the Law of Moses commands us to stone such a woman. Now what do you say?)
Vulgate: in lege autem Moses mandauit nobis huiusmodi lapidare tu ergo quid dicis (But in the law Moses commanded us to stone such people. So what do you say?)
Manuscript “e”: in lege autem nobis moyses mandauit huiusmodi lapidare tu ergo quid dicis (But in the law Moses commanded us to stone such people. So what do you say?)

Manuscript “d”: moyses autem in lege praecepit tales lapidare tu autem nunc quid dicis (Now, Moses ordered in the law that such people be stoned. But, what do you say now?)
Manuscript ff2: in lege autem praecepit nobi s moyses ut qui in alturio deprehenditur lapidetur tu autem quid dicis de ea (Now Moses commanded us it is the law that anyone caught in treason is to be stoned. But what do you say about that?)

John 8.06
Greek text: τοῦτο δὲ ἔλεγον πειράζοντες αὐτόν, ἵνα ἔχωσιν κατηγορεῖν αὐτοῦ. ὁ δὲ ἰησοῦς κάτω κύψας τῷ δακτύλῳ κατέγραφεν εἰς τὴν γῆν (They said this to test him, so that they might have some accusation against him. Jesus stooped down and wrote with his finger on the ground)
Vulgate: haec autem dicebant temptantes eum ut possessent accusare eum Iesus autem inclinans se deorsum digito scribebat in terra (And they said this, tempting him, that they might have something to accuse him of. And Jesus stooped down and wrote with his finger on the ground)
Manuscript “e”: hoc enim dicebant temptantes illum ut haberent quomodo eum accusarent Iesus autem inclinato capite digito supra terram scribebat (For they said this to test him, so that they might have something to accuse him of. But Jesus bowed his head and wrote with his finger on the ground)
Manuscript “d”: Iesus autem inclinatus digito suo scribebat in terram (And Jesus, bending down, wrote with his finger on the ground.)

Manuscript ff2: haec dicebant temptantes eum ut haberent causa adcusandi eum Iesus autem inclinato capite digito scribebat in terram (They said these things, tempting him, so that they would have something to accuse him of. But Jesus, bowing his head, wrote with his finger on the ground)

John 8.07
Greek text: ὡς δὲ ἐπέμενον ἐρωτῶντες αὐτόν, ἀνέκυψεν καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, ὁ ἀναμάρτητος ὑμῶν πρῶτος ἐπ᾽ αὐτὴν βαλέτω λίθον (When they continued to question him, he stood up and said to them: ‘Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her’)
Vulgate: cum autem perseuerarent interrogantes eum erexit se et dixit eis qui sine peccato est uestrum primus in illam lapidem mittat (But when they persisted in asking him, he stood up and said to them: Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.)
Manuscript “e”: cum ergo perseuerarent interrogantes eum adlebauit capud et dixit illis si quis uestrum sine peccato est ipse prior super illam iniciat lapidem (Then when they continued to ask him, he shook his head and said: ‘Let anyone among you be the first to throw a stone at her’)
Manuscript “d”: cum autem inmanerent interrogantes erexit se et dixit illis quis est sine peccato uestrum prior super eam mittat lapidem (But as they persisted in asking him, he stood up and said to them: Which among you is without sin? Let him be the first to throw a stone at him)

Manuscript ff2: cum autem interrogarent expectantes eum quid diceret et erexit se et dixit eis q uisque uestrum sine delicto est prior in eam lapidem iactet (But when they were waiting to ask what he would say, he straightened up and said, "He who is without sin among you must be the first to throw a stone at her")

John 8:8

Greek text: καὶ πάλιν κατακύψας ἔγραφεν εἰς τὴν γῆν (And once more he stooped down and wrote on the ground)

Vulgate: et iterum se inclinans scribebat in terra (And again stooping down, he wrote on the ground)

Manuscript “e”: et iterum inclinato capite supra terram scribebat (And again, with his head bowed above the ground, he wrote)

Manuscript “d”: et iterum inclinatus digito suo scribebat in terram (And again, stooping down, he wrote with his finger on the ground)

Manuscript ff2: et iterum inclinans se de digito scribebat in terram (And again, bending down, he wrote with his finger on the ground)

John 8.09

Greek text: οἱ δὲ ἀκούσαντες ἐξήρχοντο εἷς καθ’ εἷς ἀρξάμενοι ἀπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, καὶ κατελείφθη μόνος, καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἐν μέσῳ οὖσα (When they heard this, they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him)

Vulgate: audientes autem unus post unum exiebant incipientes a senioribus et remansit solus et mulier in medio stans (And those who heard this went

away one by one, beginning with the eldest; and it was just him and the woman standing in the middle)
Manuscript “e”: illi autem cum audissent unus post unum exiebant incipientes a senioribus et relictus est Iesus solus et mulier in medio (And when they heard this, they left one by one, starting with the oldest. And only Jesus was left, and the woman in the middle.)
Manuscript “d”: unusquisque autem iudaeorum exiebant incipientes a presbyteris uti omnes exire et remansit solus et mulier in medio cum esset (Then each of the Jews went out, beginning with the oldest, until they had all gone out. And he was left alone, while the woman stood in the middle)
Manuscript ff2: illi igitur cum audissent paulatim secedebant singuli incipientes a seniori bus omnes recesserunt et relictus est solus Iesus et ecce mulier illa in medio erat (When they heard this, they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest. And they all went away, and Jesus was left alone. And behold, the woman was in the midst.)

John 8.10
Greek Text: ἀνακύψας δὲ ὁ ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτῇ, γύναι, ποῦ εἰσιν; οὐδείς σε κατέκρινεν; (Jesus stood up and said, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?)
Vulgate: erigens autem se iesus dixit ei mulier ubi sunt nemo te condemnauit (But Jesus, standing up, said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?)
Manuscript “e”: cum adleuasset autem capud Iesus dixit ei mulier ubi sunt nemo te iudicauit (Then Jesus

lifted up his head and said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’)
Manuscript “d”: erigens autem se Iesus dixit mulieri ubi sunt nemo te condemnauit (But Jesus, standing up, said to the woman, ‘Where are they? Has no one condemned you?’)
Manuscript ff2: cumque erexisset se Iesus dixit ad eam mulier ubi sunt qui te perduxerunt nemo te lapidauit (And Jesus straightened up, and said to the woman, Where are they that brought thee? Did no man stone thee?)

John 8.11
Greek text: ἡ δὲ εἶπεν, οὐδείς, κύριε. εἶπεν δὲ ὁ ἰησοῦς, οὐδὲ ἐγώ σε κατακρίνω πορεύου, [καὶ] ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μηκέτι ἁμάρτανε (She said, ‘No one, sir.’ And Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you, go your way, and from now on, sin no more’)
Vulgate: quae dixit nemo domine dixit autem Iesus nec ego te condemnabo uade et amplius iam noli peccare (No one said, 'Lord,' but Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more')
Manuscript “e”: dixit et illa nemo domine dixit autem Iesus ad illam nec ego te iudico i et amplius noli peccare (And she said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; and sin no more"
Manuscript “d”: ad illa dixit illi nemo domine ad ille dixit nec ego te condemno uade et ex hoc iam noli peccare (He said to her, "No one, Lord." And she said to him, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more")

Manuscript ff2: et illa respondens dixit nemo domine dixit autem ei Iesus nec ego te damnabo uade ex hoc iam noli peccare (And she answered and said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.

This is a comparison between nearly contemporary manuscripts; however, as we consult later manuscripts, the number of differences increases in relation to the oldest manuscripts, since the tendency was to alter rather than preserve. If we consult manuscripts, both Greek and Latin, from the 9th century e. c., for example, we will find more divergences than between manuscripts prior to the 7th century e. c., except for those that were copied from the oldest manuscripts, although some of the latter have not survived to the present day or have survived only in fragments, especially those written on papyrus.

23. Analysis

Well, after reading this study, a Christian will be able to observe that Textual Criticism is not enough to nullify faith in the Bible, since the number of small and insignificant textual and editorial differences is abundantly greater than the few significant and compromising differences. Strictly speaking, the problem with the textual credibility of the Bible does not lie in the enormous number of insignificant discrepancies, such as small spelling errors, different order of sentences that do not alter the meaning, use of synonyms, abbreviations,

additions of words that improve understanding, differences in punctuation, etc. Rather in the seriousness of passages where the meaning is altered through additions, omissions and textual and editorial changes that compromise the reader's understanding, whether involuntarily or voluntarily. A single compromising interpolation causes more distorting effect than hundreds of small involuntary changes; the most dangerous are the intentional changes and interpolations, especially those with ideological purposes. The very interpolation of a long passage such as the PA in the gospels raises the suspicion of how many other late interpolations were not present in the autograph manuscripts, as well as how many other inauthentic interpolations could have been inserted into the texts, at a time when the narratives were only memorized during the period of oral transmission of the sayings and deeds of Jesus, before they were passed into written form. Therefore, no one is able to say with certainty how much the New Testament manuscripts were altered later, this would only be possible if the autographs of each of them were found, that is, which would result in certainty only in relation to the autograph manuscripts, since in relation to the sayings and acts of Jesus and the Apostles, it is not possible to know how much these were altered before the written composition of the originals. For example, the absence of the final verses in the Gospel of Mark (16:09-20) in the oldest manuscripts, the first gospel to be composed, raises the suspicion that Jesus did not rise again, and that the story of the resurrection is an invention made

shortly after Jesus' death by the first followers in order to compensate for the failure of Jesus' mission through a very extraordinary phenomenon, the resurrection, and thereby appease the Apostles' frustration.

The resurrection is the pillar of Christianity, which kept it from collapsing at the very beginning, because without the miracle of the resurrection, the fate of Jesus' mission would certainly have been the same as the failure of the missions of so many other Jewish guides of Antiquity. Ultimately, the story of the miracle of the resurrection prevented the death of the new-born Christianity, and once the story was believed by the first Christians, the sect prospered institutionally. Another example of how a religion does not always grow thanks to the reality of facts, but rather through the persuasive power of preachers, who were able to persuade others that someone could rise from the dead because he was the son of God.

Even short interpolations, such as the phrase “the sins of each one of them” inserted in John 8:8, after the passage “And once more he stooped down and wrote on the ground” is compromising, since it points to yet another fantastic miracle of Jesus, a feat that is not reported in most manuscripts. Therefore, whether or not someone has this power makes a huge difference.

According to what has been reported and analysed above, it is possible to see how Textual Criticism is an annoying obstacle in the Bible and, by extension, in many other sacred texts of different ancient religions. At a time when modern means of

communication, such as newspapers, magazines, radio, television and, more recently, the Internet, did not yet exist, the means of manipulating information was through altering texts in order to make the public believe in the way that the preacher or writer wanted the listeners or readers to accept it. This manipulative resource did not occur only in Christianity; many more involuntary and voluntary alterations are found in the sacred texts of other religions. Furthermore, in a time and place where 80% to 90% of the population was illiterate, an author and a scribe carried with them an influential authority over the immense illiterate population, which is why textual manipulation was very effective in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, especially in religious circles. Therefore, altering canonized texts was the most effective instrument for guiding the understanding of the entourage towards the understanding that the manipulator desired, and the Church knew how to do this successfully in the past, which is why it grew so much.

What Textual Criticism leads us to conclude, after investigating the many alterations, interpolations and omissions, whether voluntary or involuntary, as well as the grammatical errors and spelling mistakes, is that the New Testament is far from being a divine work, but rather an exclusively human composition, since the hand of man is present in everything and the divine hand is absent.

24. Obras Consultadas

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